

Ballyfore Overcome Depleted Daingean to Reach Last Eight

Ballyfore 3-9

Daingean 1-7

Injuries which deprived Daingean of three players, including county man John Kenny who picked up a groin strain in training on Thursday evening, left the Maroons sadly depleted for their opening round fixture against Ballyfore in the Offaly S.F.C. played in Walsh Island on Sunday evening. Their misfortune made Ballyfore's passage into the quarter-finals a little easier than might otherwise have been the case, and the Edenderry parish side cruised through with eight points to spare in winning by 3-9 to 1-7.

In an undistinguished game Ballyfore were always in the driving seat, and Daingean were left to play catch-up for almost the entire duration of the game. The winners not alone held a marked physical advantage, but they were also faster and more direct in both their approach and finish.

Daingean did not enjoy the best of luck, for in addition to being obliged to take to the field without John Kenny, whose experience would have been a massive asset in a game such as this, a missed penalty midway through the first half further deflated their self-confidence.

The outcome was fairly predictable by half-time, for having played with the aid of a diagonal breeze Daingean went in at the break trailing by double scores – 1-5 to 0-4. Thereafter Ricey Scully's charges were always struggling, and their goal when it came from a second penalty award four minutes from the end was too late to be of any rallying benefit.

The football throughout was scrappy, with the Daingean forwards consistently playing into the hands of the Ballyfore defence by ballooning high balls into the goal area, sacrificing accuracy for height. Against the tall opposing backs this was akin to tossing buns to an elephant.

Although by no means a "dirty" game, the exchanges were tough and uncompromising, with play interrupted by an aggregate of 53 frees, including the two penalties, in the hour. In this respect Ballyfore were the greater offenders by almost a two to one ratio.

Strong Defence

The winners' strong and resourceful defence defied being breached until the closing minutes, with Michael Hoey dependable between the posts, cocooned by backs of the calibre of Christy McGlynn, Finbar Killally and Conor Evans.

Mark Evans was the dominant figure at midfield, while in attack the three Coffeys, Tom, David and Kevin shared the major scoring honours, with Ross Evans making a considerable non-scoring impact.

Daingean, in addition to John Kenny, were short Craig Slattery and Tommy Kelly, and their exceptionally young side included seven under-21 players. Inevitably, their lack of experience at this level became palpably apparent, despite the best efforts of such as Brendan Donagher, who started at centre-half back before moving to his left in the second half after the Daingean mentors had made a number of interval switches, Tony Kenny, first at midfield and later as spearhead of the attack, J.J. Hanlon, Paul Jordan and Michael Connolly.

The Goals

Following an early exchange of points between Gary Murray (free) and Brendan Donagher and a missed goal-scoring chance by Ross Evans, Ballyfore struck the first

decisive blow in the 8th minute when Tom Coffey raced through a porous Daingean defence before unleashing an unstoppable drive that gave goalkeeper Stapleton absolutely no chance. That goal gave Ballyfore the kernel of their 1-5 to 0-4 lead, although it would have been a lot closer at the break if John Greene's well struck penalty had not come crashing back off the centre of the crossbar.

During the break Daingean revised their line-out. Tony Kenny moved to centre-forward and his place at midfield was filled by switching Stephen Burns from the left-half back berth, with Brendan Donagher and Ciaran Carey swapping places in the halfback line.

Although Daingean were the first to score on the resumption when Michael Connolly pointed a free, two goals in the third quarter plunged them into deep trouble. First, a forty metres free by Mark Evans deceived everybody, including Stapleton, before finding a nesting place in the corner of the Daingean net in the 36th minute.

Any chance that remained for the Maroons evaporated eight minutes later, and again it was a long-range effort that did the damage, with Kevin Coffey's sideline kick from the left being turned into his own net by the 'keeper.

Facing arrears of 3-6 to 0-6 going into the final quarter, Daingean's plight was desperate, but although championship elimination was staring them in the face they never threw in the towel. Their persistence was finally rewarded in the 56th minute when Martin Daly was fouled inside the area, and Tony Kenny's spot-kick was superbly placed out of Hoey's reach. It was, however, too late to serve any real purpose other than improving the appearance of the scoreboard.

Scorers:

Ballyfore – T.Coffey, M.Evans and K.Coffey 1-1 each, G.Murray 0-3 (1 free), D.Coffey 0-2, S.Nutterfield 0-1

Daingean – T.Kenny 1-1 (pen), M.Connolly 0-3 (3 frees), B.Donagher, E.Greene and P.Jordan 0-1 each

Ballyfore: Michael Hoey, Liam O'Brien, Conor Evans, Christy McGlynn, Eoin Dunne, Finbar Kilally, Fergus Kelly, Mark Evans, Sylvester Nutterfield, Gordon Nutterfield, Tom Coffey, Gary Murray, Kevin Coffey (Captain), David Coffey, Ross Evans. Sub – Brian Spain for Gordon Nutterfield.

Daingean: Stapleton, Willie Ryan, Mark Whittle, J.J. Hanlon, Ciaran Carey, Brendan Donagher, Stephen Burns, Tony Kenny (Captain), John Greene, Paul Jordan, Sean McEvoy,, Michael Connolly, Eddie Greene, Martin Daly, P.J. Fay. Sub – Ray Delaney.

1st Half	Goals	Points	Wides	Frees	45's
Ballyfore	1	5	6	9	1
Daingean	0	4	4	18	1
2nd Half					
Ballyfore	2	4	3	9	0
Daingean	1	3	4	17	0
Total					
Ballyfore	3	9	9	18	1
Daingean	1	7	8	35	1